



WILLIAM R. GRACE.

Romantic life story of an Irish lad who ran away from home to be a Robinson Crusoe, who twice became Mayor of New York and died a multi-millionaire

BRIGHT eyed, serious faced, dreamily gazing out to where the fortified headlands of Queenstown harbor shut off the breath of the blue ocean, a fourteen-year-old boy sat dangling his legs over the edge of the landing stage and singing softly to himself. This in the Spring of the year 1847. A shock of brown hair fell over a forehead that was broad, sun-burned, imaginative and full of force. In the depths of his gray-blue eyes was a look that made people turn and gaze after him on the street.

Tucked into the bosom of his blue jean shirt was a thumb-worn book that a sea captain had given him the year before for going on an errand, a book that has sent more young boys running away to sea than any story ever printed, a book telling the adventures of one Robinson Crusoe.

If there was any one thing that young William Russell Grace was determined to do it was to reach Juan Fernandez Island, off the coast of Chili, and become another Robinson Crusoe. In the following chapters is told the romance of how the little Queenstown boy never found the island, but became in time a greater man than Robinson Crusoe ever dreamed of being, for the ships carrying his flag to-day sail every sea, and the agents of the shipping house of W. R. Grace & Co. penetrate every clime, and particularly monopolize the trade of Chili and Peru, the great countries lying nearest the island that was the goal of his boyish dreams.

CHAPTER I.

He Runs Away From Home.

HAVING failed utterly to convince his parents that Ireland was too small a country for his expanding genius, and that the broad seas were his natural environment, and having been told by his natural guardian that any attempt to go to sea would result in his receiving the sound drubbing he deserved, he determined to leave home without the consent of any one, not even that of the captain of the ship he should sail upon.

So it happened that when the next great Yankee merchantman weighed anchor and glided out past Haulboine Island and Drake Bay the captain never dreamed that stowed away between decks was the keen-faced youngster he had seen playing nervously about the landing stage all the week. William Grace was a tender-hearted boy, and it is not to be supposed that the breaking of old ties cost him never a tear as he felt the vessel picking its way out between the headlands and past the big guns that frowned down upon the entrance of the harbor then as they do to-day. But was he not to return rich and powerful in a few years and make up to his sweet little mother by his hoarded wealth for all the heart-aches that his running away had cost her?

Very soon the long swell of the ocean put a stop to his penitence, or, rather, intensified it, for he was very ill, and staggered out on deck, where the sailor-folk began immediately to cure his seasickness by making him work harder than he had ever toiled in his life.

At Valparaiso, in spite of the watchfulness of the captain, who had taken a liking to the boy, he escaped and hid till the ship had sailed, and started out to find his island. But it was not for years that he got the chance to try to land at that lonely isle, and in the meantime he worked about the wharves of Valparaiso and finally shipped as cabin boy and later as able seaman on ships trading between Chili, Peru and New York.

His early schooling had given him a good foundation upon which to build, and his habit of observation proved a constant education to him. In New York he left the ship and tried for work. The best he could get was employment in a cheap restaurant, where

he saw much more of the seamy side of life than of the silken.

But he was fast becoming a man, and with inherited good blood and industry he saved every cent he could, often going without his dinner that the price might be added to his account in the savings bank.

With his knowledge of Spanish and South American ways he secured a place in a shipping house, where he rose rapidly.

CHAPTER II.

He Begins to Climb the Ladder.

IN a few years he had become so important to the progress of the commercial house that he was selected as its agent on a mission to Liverpool. There wealthy men were reorganizing a company to compete for the rich South American trade, and he was invited to attend one of the meetings of the new company.

His accurate and ready knowledge of Peru and Chili was so astonishing that in spite of his penniless condition as compared to the others, he was offered a partnership, contributing his labor and experience as his part of the capital. The firm of Bryce & Co. sent him home to Ireland for a vacation, and there he was reconciled to his father, who loaned him money to hold his own in the new company.

On his return to Liverpool the firm name was changed to Bryce, Grace & Co., and Grace, as the junior partner, was sent to Peru as its manager. That was in 1852, and the boy was twenty years old.

It was while in Peru that he fitted out a yacht for the cruise from Peru to Chili and to the little island, four hundred miles at sea, where Robinson Crusoe had lived. The yacht was wrecked and the young man escaped with his life, and the clothing he wore.

His attention to business, together with the violent fevers of the country, broke down his health, and in 1857 he came north and went to Maine to pass the winter. He had met Captain George W. Gilchrist, of Thomaston, and accepted an invitation to visit him in his home near that little Maine city.

While walking from the town to Gilchrist's country house he lost his way

in a snowstorm and fell exhausted in the spruce forests through which the road lay. There, half-buried in snow, his body was struck by the feet of Gilchrist's horse as the latter returned from his trip to town to meet his guest. Gilchrist got off his horse, kicked the snow from the half-frozen man, and throwing him upon the pommel of his saddle rode with him to his home.

For four weeks Grace lay unconscious in the home of the shipbuilder, and when at last he opened his eyes with the look of reason in them, he saw sitting beside his bed and tenderly nursing him through the Valley of the Shadow the most beautiful young girl he had ever beheld.

She was none other than Miss Lillias Gilchrist, daughter of his host, and in the weeks of convalescence that followed a bond of friendship and sympathy was knit between the two young people that ripened into love when the handsome young Peruvian-Irishman was strong enough to sit up and drive about the country.

Grace won the girl's promise, and went back to Peru to work two years longer, returning in 1859 a wealthy young man to make her his bride. Their wedding trip aboard one of the ships of his company took them to Liverpool, where the firm became W. R. Grace & Co., with a branch house in New York.

CHAPTER III.

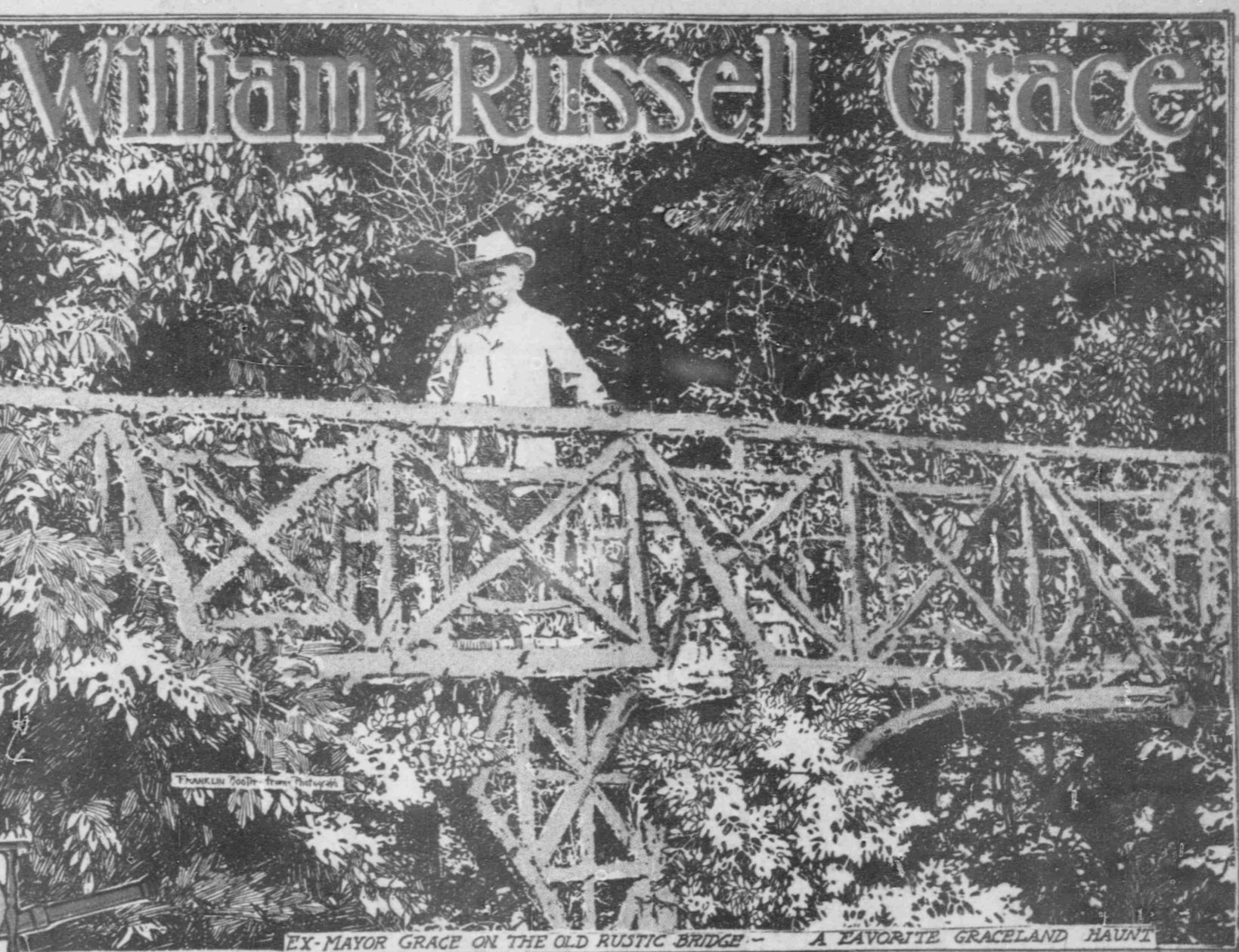
The Dawn of Power

MR. GRACE came to New York to live in 1855, and in a year or two the branch office here became the headquarters of the largest shipping firm doing business with South American countries. By now the company flag of the big Grace firm was familiar in every seaport in the world and the boy who had dreamed dreams on the landing stage in Queenstown wielded a commercial power that might well be envied by the princes of the world. It is nearly half a century since the name of Grace appeared in South America, and in that time the family interests have grown till there is a branch office in every great South American city, and their ships carry an immense traffic between that continent and the United States and Europe.

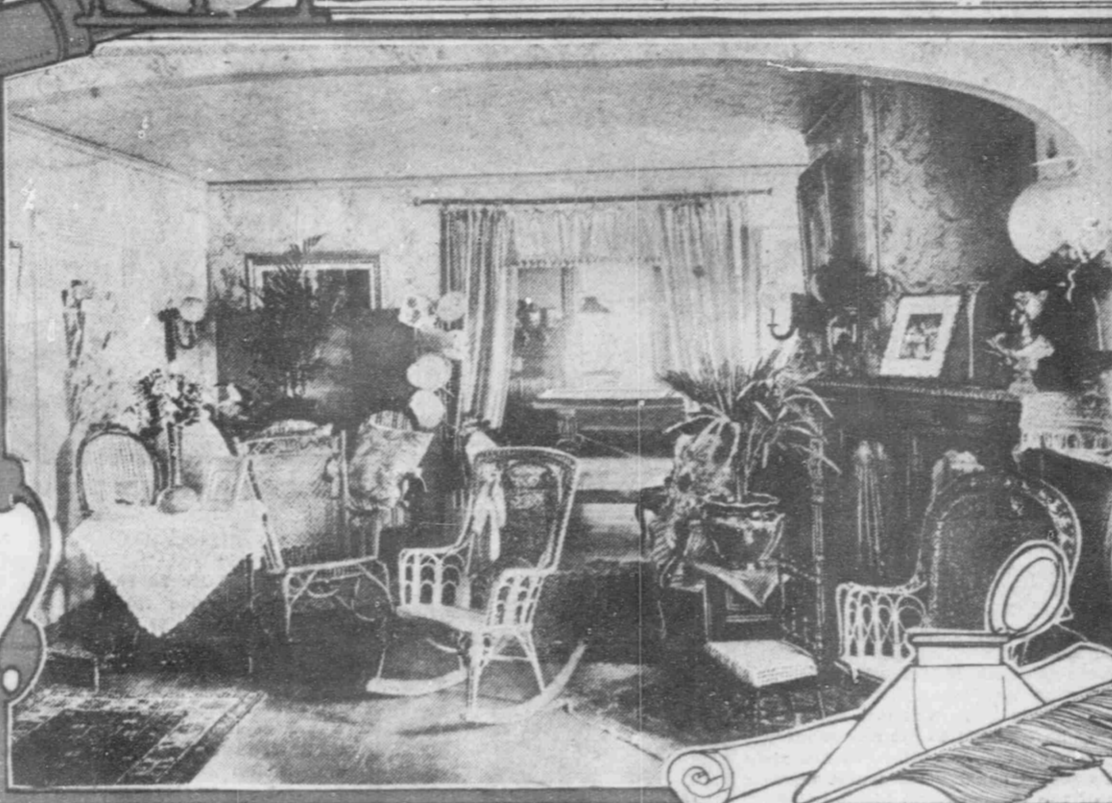
The firm of W. R. Grace & Co., now one of the most influential in the world, was incorporated in West Virginia in 1895, with a capital of \$2,000,000, and no stock was ever put upon the market. It was made up by the consolidation of the several Grace companies of North and South America, and the officers, from William R. Grace, president, to Edward Eyre, secretary, were all relatives.

Mr. Grace first came before the American public in 1880, when the great

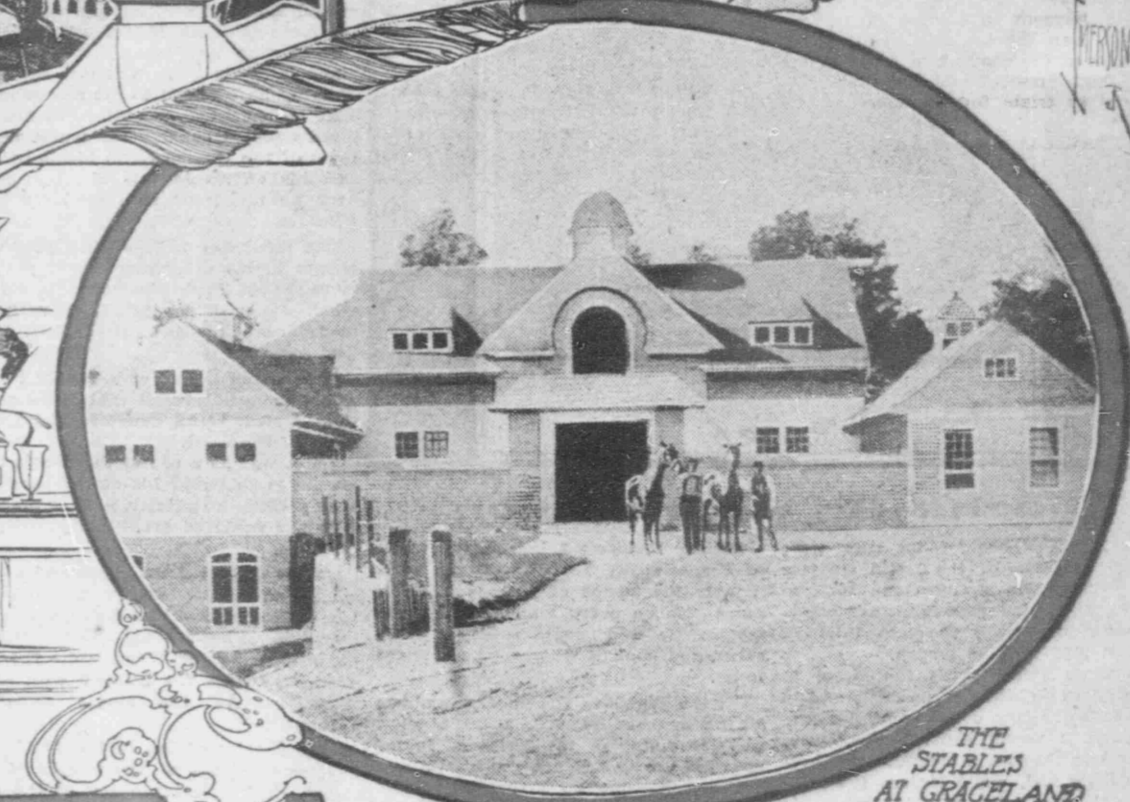
William Russell Grace



EX-MAYOR GRACE ON THE OLD RUSTIC BRIDGE - A FAVORITE GRACELAND HAUNT



EX-MAYOR GRACE'S SUMMER HOME - DRAWING ROOM -



THE STABLES AT GRACELAND



THE EX-MAYOR'S BILLIARD ROOM -

New England mother in temperament and beauty, became famous as The Three Graces and were accounted among the most beautiful women in America. Two of them are Mrs. Albert F. D'Oench and Mrs. George E. Kent. Miss Louise Nathalie Grace is unmarried. His sons are George P. Grace and William R. Grace, Jr.

CHAPTER IV.

The Goal at Last

NEW YORK never had a more public spirited citizen. Remembering the sweet little mother from whom he had run away in Ireland, and whose early training and prayers had followed him all his life, he advocated the founding of a school for the training of young women in industrial pursuits, partly in her memory.

The institution that bears his name and is located at Sixtieth street, between Columbus and Amsterdam avenues, was the result. Eight hundred radiant young women come forth from this institute every year bearing in their hands diplomas that show they can cook, wash, sew and do all the other things that go so far toward making a home happy.

The beautiful home of ex-Mayor Grace, at 31 East Seventy-ninth street, is a place of culture and refinement, remembered as a pleasant domicile by many of the most distinguished people who have visited America. The love of literature which began with "Robinson Crusoe" continued all his life, and the collection of books in his home is one of the most interesting and valuable things about it.

The house is filled with souvenirs of many years of travel and trading with foreign people. The exquisite taste of Mrs. Grace has made the house a museum of fine art and a study in harmonies.

The summer home of the Graces at Great Neck, on Long Island, is one of the most beautiful and expensive establishments in the suburbs of New York, and the grounds are charming. The house overlooks picturesque Great Neck Bay, a branch of the Sound, and affords an expanse of salt water that is typical of the love the man always bore for the sea, which was his great arena of operations, and enabled him to amass the fortune of ten million dollars that stood to his credit on the day of his death.

It was characteristic of the man that after the attack of pneumonia several months ago he set his business affairs to rights with a cool and thoughtful head, and having settled them, expressed himself as sorry for his approaching death only because he had been unable to do more good in his life of seventy-two years, adding that dying was not so serious a thing after all as many people thought, but that living tested a man's grit and integrity.

After a partial recovery from pneumonia he grew gradually weaker till the forenoon of March 21. Then, with his children around him, and the woman who had nursed him through his first illness in Thomaston, sitting, gray haired and sweet faced, by his side, he passed away without having, in his busy life, found time to visit that island of Juan Fernandez in quest of which he had set out in boyhood, but having discovered and made happier greater lands than that of Crusoe.